

CONCEPTUALIZING A MERGER OF ISLAMIC VALUES AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC RULES

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ABSTRACT

Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 emphasizes that it is imperative for Malaysia to strengthen its position in the global economy. This aspiration parallels the ambition of the Japanese government known as the Fifth Basic Plan for Science and Technology Basic Plan established in April 2016 which proposed Society 5.0 as a future society that Japan aspires to be. Anchored by the Society 5.0 definition: "A human-centered society that balances economic advancement with the resolution of social problems by a system that highly integrates cyberspace and physical space," this paper attempts to conceptualize a framework of merging Islamic values with the sociolinguistic rules in communication in English language curriculum planning. The framework is conceptualized to assist Malaysian students to be proficient in English language as well as be tactful in communicating in order to maximize their employability in the global workforce. Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), being a leading innovation-driven entrepreneurial research university in engineering, science and technology, has long realized in this modern competitive world, mastering one's own academic field is not adequate for fresh graduates to secure a promising job. Aligned with the university vision and mission, Thrust 1 - Holistic, Innovative and Entrepreneurial Academia – reflects UTM's commitment to produce marketable graduates to support and sustain the nation's economic development. English language skills, labelled as soft skills, are a part of the prized employability today irrespective of the graduates' academic fields. For the purpose of this study, Sociotheological framework by Juergensmeyer (2013) is deemed as the appropriate foundation that can support the claim of merging Islamic values with sociolinguistic rules from the perspectives of English language curriculum planning. The justification for choosing oral communication is even though it is easier compared to written communication with the utilization of paralinguistic and non-verbal features to express and understand the intended message, interlocutors should always observe sociolinguistic conventions. Hence, the objective of this study is to debate Islamic values can be integrated with course content and instruction in developing the heuristic university English curriculum to attain Society 5.0. A critical literature review methodology is employed to identify similar and dissimilar themes and ideas revolving the proposed

concept. Novel connections between the key concepts or constructs identified, and the logic of connections between concepts are discussed within the ambit of Sociotheological framework. Finally, the guidelines outlined by Hirschheim (2008) and Toulmin (1958) are used to explain the positioning of this paper.

Keywords: *Islamic Values, English Language Curriculum Planning, Sociolinguistic Rules, Critical Literature Review*

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia, like its counterpart Japan, is rigorously pursuing a strong economic position globally. Hence, it is not surprising that Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 parallels the Japanese Fifth Basic Plan for Science and Technology Basic Plan which proposed Society 5.0 as a future society. Society 5.0 has been defined as "A human-centered society that balances economic advancement with the resolution of social problems by a system that highly integrates cyberspace and physical space." This definition is reflective of the needs of the rapidly changing world of work that witnesses the over reliance of smart machines and / or the replacement of human workers by robots in routine tasks. Education reform seems to be the most feasible action that a nation should consider to face the challenges of preparing Asia's youth for Society 5.0. This includes closing the region's enormous gaps in basic learning, and equipping them with 21st century skills, such as inter- and multidisciplinary thinking, creativity, critical thinking, resilience and cross-cultural competencies (Lim & Grant, 2014). Hence, this study seeks to argue the case of developing a heuristic English language curriculum that integrates sociolinguistic rules with Islamic values whilst defining the bigger surrounding contexts of Society 5.0 in which English language is used.

To suit the purpose of this conceptual paper, cross-cultural competencies are construed as "a complex concept generally defined by a set of attitudes, knowledge, and skills one needs when engaging with difference." (Deardorff, 2017). It can be inferred that 'skills' subsume English language skills which are undoubtedly

highly regarded today irrespective of the academic fields of fresh graduates. Evidently, a survey with 472 JobStreet.com clients who comprised of managers and senior managers in various industries across Malaysia showed that the employers identified five main reasons why fresh graduates found it very difficult to get hired, and poor command of the English language was the second highest cause cited by them, next to the expectation of unrealistic salaries (Jobstreet.com., 2015).

In similar vein, general English modules offered in many courses have been criticized for hardly meeting the disciplinary-driven English language needs of workplace practices (Yusuf, Yunus & Embi, 2018). Hence, proponents of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) have suggested that the teacher / course developer needs to understand the culture and ways of thinking that go with different professions and vocations which are also known as discourse communities (Harding, 2007; Mat Said, 2020). The objective of this study is to debate Islamic values can be integrated in the English curriculum which subsumes course content materials, formative or / and summative assessment etc. to achieve Society 5.0. Oral communication skill has been chosen as the vehicle for this conceptualization as it is easier compared to written communication. Even though oral communication can utilize paralinguistic and non-verbal features to express and understand the intended message, this study argues that highly esteemed Islamic values can be consolidated with sociolinguistic rules observed by the society. According to Grimshaw (1980), sociolinguistic rules "*govern the use of language resources within sets of social constraints, i.e., they are selectional rules.*" (796) (original italicized). A critical literature review

is employed to sort out similar and dissimilar themes and ideas revolving the concept proposed by this study. Novel connections between the key concepts or constructs identified, and the logic of connections between concepts are discussed within the ambit of Sociotheological framework. Finally, the guidelines outlined by Hirschheim (2008) and Toulmin (1958) are used to explain the positioning of this paper.

METHOD

This is a conceptual paper guided by Hirschheim (2008) that highlights assumptions by employing the critical literature review method that is qualitative in nature. The critical literature review or also known as integrative approach was employed in this study as it suits the purpose of the paper which is to debate Islamic values can be integrated in the English course content materials and formative or / and summative assessment to realize Society 5.0. As this is a case study of a developing topic, the purpose of using an integrative review method is “to overview the knowledge base, to critically review and potentially re-conceptualize, and to expand on the theoretical foundation of the chosen topic as it develops.” (Synder, 2019: 336). Therefore, literature on the research topic was assessed, critiqued, and synthesized in a way that facilitated new theoretical frameworks and perspectives to surface (Torraco, 2005).

The published materials were chosen and analysed to help answer the following research question:

What are the current theoretical issues and debates related to the integration of Islamic / moral / universal values in English curriculum or other academic and non-academic programmes?

The justification for including other university courses, secondary school subjects and training programmes beside English is that there is a dearth of literature on theoretical issues and debates related to the integration of Islamic values in English courses at tertiary

level. Moreover, critical literature review often requires a more creative collection of data, as the purpose is usually not to include all articles ever published on the topic but rather “to combine perspectives and insights from different fields or research traditions” (Snyder, 2019: 336). Hence, the author broadened the research to pastoral facets, moral and universal values in settings that ranged from secondary school to tertiary education to teacher education and a rehabilitation programme for refugees. The following are steps taken by the authors to carry out the critical literature review adapted from Torraco (2005) and Harvard University:

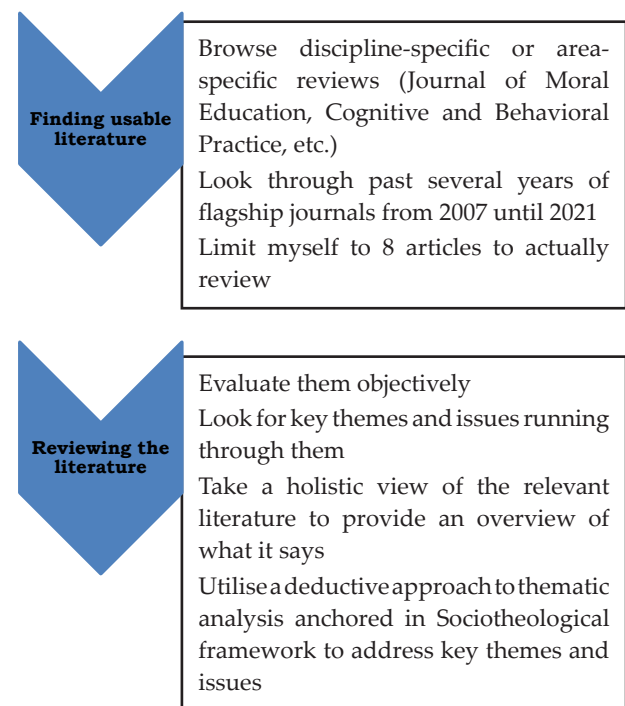


Figure 1. The critical literature review process

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The findings are presented in a table to answer the following research question:

What are the current theoretical issues and debates related to the integration of Islamic / moral / universal values in English curriculum or other academic and non-academic programmes?

Table 1. Critical literature review

Author(s) Publication year Location	Research approach	Data collection instrument	Assessment	Critique	Synthesis
Pantić & Wubbels (2012) Bosnia & Herzegovina and Serbia	Mixed-Method	Questionnaire Focus group discussion	This article addressed the perspectives of curriculum end users - teachers	Values here are not related to holistic curriculum planning but simply at the level of the teacher as a conduit between curriculum and classroom practice	Teachers' moral roles are to a certain extent relevant to the Society 5.0 concept.
Tamuri (2007) Malaysia	Case study Descriptive	Semi-structured interviews – thematic analysis	Challenges of and recommendations for the implementation of 16 universal sacred values in the Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools	The religious teachers' views are more suitable for secondary school Islamic subject curriculum context	The needs analysis could contribute to the development of heuristic English curriculum with the inclusion of other stakeholders who represent the Society 5.0
Lubis, Mustapha & Lampoh (2009) Brunei	Case study Descriptive	Literature review	The mind, hands and heart concept in Integrated Islamic Education system, its challenges and recommendations	Apparently, the delivery of the curriculum falls heavily on the teacher. Learners are merely treated as inactive recipients of the curriculum	The model by Al-Shaybaniy (1991) followed by the education system is expected to produce well-balanced individuals and this aligns with the goal of Society 5.0.
Pantić & Wubbels (2012) Bosnia & Herzegovina and Serbia	Mixed-Method	Questionnaire Focus group discussion	This article addressed the perspectives of curriculum end users - teachers	Values here are not related to holistic curriculum planning but simply at the level of the teacher as a conduit between curriculum and classroom practice	Teachers' moral roles are to a certain extent relevant to the Society 5.0 concept.
Cubukcu (2014) Turkey	Experimental	Semi-structured interview, survey	The development of a moral reasoning model based on the findings is relevant to the proposed heuristic curriculum.	Citing Brady (2011) that teaching is values-laden, the researcher did not connect this ideal with the curriculum. Thus, the impression given is that the research participants have to individually nurture these professional and personal values.	The moral reasoning model could be expanded to address the challenges faced by Society 5.0.
Haja Mohideen Bin Mohamed Ali (2017) Malaysia	Case study Descriptive	n.a	Lesson content and activities discussed in this paper appear relevant to the topic. Universal values listed are special people, the environment, social issues, health, science and technology.	Learner-teacher interaction during the lessons was not observed and recorded. Too narrow definition of Islamic values in education.	Value education and English language acquisition can go hand in hand. Values may be seen as subjective and objective. Hence, the values have to be universally acceptable by the Society 5.0

Author(s) Publication year Location	Research approach	Data collection instrument	Assessment	Critique	Synthesis
					standards in order to be integrated into instruction.
Husbands and Lang (2018) Germany	Case study Descriptive	Observation	Team/ Small Group model (T/SG) focuses on development of student's behaviour via pastoral and academic structures.	Cannot be generalized to the wider issues of school-community relationships; student perceptions of the T/SG model are not included.	TS/G model appears to be a feasible pedagogy for the integration of Islamic values with sociolinguistics rules in the proposed heuristic English curriculum.
Hanny & Noviansyah (2020) Indonesia	Case study Descriptive	Observation, interviews, literature review	The concept of integrating Muhammadiyah Islamic values with Accounting Education to inculcate ethical behavior of students in future professional settings.	Muhammadiyah Islamic values is a narrow perspective of Islamic values. There are other general and broad values that could be universally accepted in the target professional setting and society as a whole.	The <i>ulul albab</i> concept is similar to a hidden curriculum with emphasis on developing soft skills. Similar to studies conducted by Tamuri (2007), Lubis, Mustapha & Lampoh (2009), Pantić & Wubbels (2012) and Cubukcu (2014) which argue that teachers play a significant role in shaping the students' awareness of character-forming values.
Bentley, Feeny, Dolezal, Klein, Marks, Graham, Zoel (2021) USA	Mixed-method (6 sessions)	Focus group, survey	This is a low-cost, self-sustaining model of a faith-based intervention that addresses the psychological wounds of trauma and promotes community reconciliation for Muslim communities.	The Islamic Trauma Healing Programme is delivered in mosques and thus, considered informal education.	Employing narratives of prophets and private time with Allah during dua (i.e informal prayer) promote social connectedness and community building. This concept is similar to Hanny & Noviansyah (2020) whereby prayers can define a character.

ANALYSIS

The analysis of findings will be presented using Toulmin's framework (1958) of persuasive writing which consists of three necessary components which are claims, grounds, and warrants. Toulmin's optional argument properties are not addressed in this paper as they are deemed more suitable for future defence of the present paper's stance. Aligned with the study purpose, the claim takes the form of an assertion (Karbach, 1987) that Islamic values can be integrated in the English curriculum which

subsumes course content materials, formative or / and summative assessment etc.

Revisiting the definition of Society 5.0 - "A human-centered society that balances economic advancement with the resolution of social problems by a system that highly integrates cyberspace and physical space." - through the lens of Sociotheological framework (Juergensmeyer, 2013; Juergensmeyer & Sheikh, 2013), this study is in complete agreement that there are religious justifications for social phenomena that are happening worldwide.

In addition, Juergensmeyer (2013) affirms that sociotheology is not about social scientists studying religious matters but on how a set of religious criteria defines social reality.

Based on the critical literature review, all the studies highlight concerns of how the society is thriving in the millennium whilst meeting the ever-growing economic demands. The macro and micro effects on the society are mostly worrying as seen in the trend of escalating social problems, deteriorating mental health, trauma-related disorders, negative attitude, and unruly behaviours to name a few. Education is the best solution to curb the social ills and researchers worldwide have investigated the possibility of integrating religious or moral or universal values with academic curriculum or training modules. They have weighed in the challenges and concluded that despite several setbacks, it is worth it to integrate Islamic / moral / universal values in the English curriculum or other academic and non-academic programmes. These form the grounds - the foundation of the argument put forth by this study - and are the specific facts to support the claim of this paper (Zainuddin & Rafik-Galea, 2016).

For this study, the warrant that links the grounds to the claims and gives the grounds general support as well as justification (Toulmin, 1958; Hirschheim, 2008) is the notion that integrating Islamic values with sociolinguistic rules for the heuristic English curriculum will realize Society 5.0. The oral component of the English curriculum is deemed suitable for this purpose as it is the easiest to master of all four skills and learners' awareness of sociolinguistic rules will be further enhanced by integrating the rules with Islamic values. Based on the critical literature review, the following presuppositions underlying the concept are as follows:

1. Needs analysis is the backbone of English language curriculum development (Stufflebeam, McCormick, Brinkerhoff & Nelson, 1985). Therefore, all stakeholders such as prominent religious figures, influential industry representatives, policy makers, researchers, educators and parents to name a few should be invited to give their opinions on how to achieve Society 5.0 via Islamic values.
2. Mohamed Ali (2017) ascribes Islamic values to be taught at an Islamic institution only which this study finds too polarizing. The same can be said about the Muhammadiyah Islamic values described by Hanny and Noviansyah (2020). Broad Islamic values are similar if not more encompassing than universal values currently embedded in Malaysian school curriculum (Tamuri, 2007; Mohamed Ali, 2017). For this heuristic university English curriculum, general Islamic values can be integrated tacitly (*ulul albab*) and implicitly with the teaching and learning of sociolinguistics rules in oral communication.
3. Teachers dominated the discussion in the literature reviewed. Nevertheless, the heuristic English curriculum should not put too much strain on the instructor to integrate the Islamic values in their instruction. Suffice that they employ the T/SG model recommended by Husbands and Lang (2018) which will empower the students to learn from and with each other. Peer support system seems more practical in developing positive attributes and character building. For Muslim students, instructors could supplement the course materials with narratives of prophets and guidance on making dua, activities which Bentley et al (2021) attest are able to promote social connectedness and community building, and the letter specifically defines character (Hanny & Noviansyah, 2020). On the other hand, moral reasoning model as defined by Cubukcu (2014) is more suitable for the non-Muslim instructors and students alike.
4. Although the majority of literature critically reviewed highlighted the need for instructors to be the disseminators of the moral values, this heuristic English curriculum propounds the importance of collaboration between English and Islamic content specialists. Based on her study of developing content based English curriculum in a naval apprenticeship context, Mat Said (2020) posits that the collaboration can be beneficial to both parties involved as long as there is mutual

respect and understanding on both sides. For instance, the narratives of prophets and supplications to complement the course materials could be prepared by the Islamic content specialists. English instructors could deliver the Islamic values in breadth whilst the Islamic content specialists could provide consultation for English instructors and students alike for in-depth understanding.

5. According to Grimshaw (1980), sociolinguistic rules or selectional rules mean that terms and phrases used should be appropriate to the context of communication. Grimshaw (1980) labels these terms and phrases as codes. He further iterates that change selections (code-switching) happen under circumstances that necessitate the change. Thus, this study takes the position that sociolinguistic rules are worth integrated with Islamic values for the simple reason that Islam stresses the importance of *ummah* building and well-balanced societies (Lubis et al., 2009; Hanny & Noviansyah, 2020; Bentley et al., 2021). When using English, learners need to be acutely conscious of the governing rules and culture of the society they are in. How can Islamic values be merged with the sociolinguistic rules? An ayah in the Qu'ran (17:53) specifically dictates how an individual should carry himself:

وقل لعبادي يقولوا التي هي احسن

“And tell My servants to say that which is best...”

There are many more instances of everyday behaviour that can be found in the Qu'ran, hadiths and narratives of the prophets.

CONCLUSION

Staying true to the tradition of conceptual paper (Hirschheim, 2008), the claim that Islamic values can be integrated with the sociolinguistic rules in the heuristic English curriculum to externalize Society 5.0 was addressed. Eight journal articles that are bound by the ideal of merging values - religious, moral and universal

- with academic and non-academic programmes were reviewed using the integrative approach outlined by Torracco (2005), Snyder (2019) and Harvard University. The findings consisted of perspectives and insights from different fields and research traditions were analysed deductively to form the basis that support the claim of this paper. Overall, the studies concluded that there are more advantages than disadvantages to merging religious, moral and universal values with academic curriculum and non-academic modules at programmatic, institutional, societal and national levels. The warrant was made up of five presuppositions underlying the argument of this paper which are systematic needs analysis should be administered to the curriculum stakeholders; broad Islamic values are more desirable to be integrated with sociolinguistic rules either tacitly or implicitly; students instead of instructors should be empowered to chart their sociolinguistics competencies particularly; collaboration between English and Islamic content specialists should be fostered; and sociolinguistic rules will be enriched by Islamic values for the simple reason that Islam is for continuous *ummah* building and peaceful societies. In a nutshell, Islamic values integrated with sociolinguistic rules in English curriculum are constructive in accomplishing Society 5.0.

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80% of the references was taken from scholarly journals, and 20% book and book chapters.

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